Health and Safety Authority Annual Report 2017 – Key Points in Relation to Construction Matters

The Health and Safety Authority ("HSA") recently published its Annual Report for 2017. It is the second Annual Report to be published under the Authority’s strategy for 2016 to 2018.

The HSA is responsible for ensuring adherence with health and safety legislation across a diverse range of sectors including agriculture, chemicals and construction.

HSA Inspections & Investigations (Construction Sector)

In 2017, the HSA carried out 4,413 inspections and investigations. It issued 115 improvement notices and 319 prohibition notices. Verbal advice was given in 1,894 inspections/investigations that took place and 2,109 written advices were delivered.

A total of 3,995 inspections were carried out by the HSA under the occupational safety and health legislation, an increase of 10% from last year. This increase correlates with the rise in employment in this sector.

HSA work programme

One of the HSA’s main aims this year was to increase the level of construction inspections based on the risk profile of the sector. This led to the majority of inspections undertaken by the HSA in 2017 being carried out on small contractors and self employed workers. Enforcement actions (in the form of improvement notices, prohibition notices, and written inspection reports) were taken in 56% of these inspections.
Other plans actioned by the HSA in 2017 included:

- Assessing the management of risks to both health and safety through the inspection process;

- Inspecting major infrastructure projects;

- Conducting two separate one-week inspection campaigns. The focus for these inspections will be linked to the Action Plan of the Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (CSPAC) for 2017;

- Continuing to engage and work with national stakeholders in the construction sector through the CSPAC;

- Continuing to engage with the Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland to share experiences and develop cross border initiatives to increase awareness and compliance;

- Continuing work with the Temporary Traffic Management at Roadworks Committee of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) to produce operational guidance;

- Supporting Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES), together with SOLAS (Further Education and Training Authority) and QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland), in maintaining and developing the national qualifications and training structures for the construction sector;

- Developing guidance on two topics: occupational health in construction and the control of reversing vehicles on construction projects;

- Developing initiatives to promote worker involvement and consultation in the sector and to support the work of the safety representative;

- Developing initiatives to raise awareness of safety and health among the self-employed and small contractors; and
Developing a construction-related, problem based learning brief for use on third-level courses.

In relation to health and safety management compliance in construction:

- 71% of workplaces had a safety statement prepared and available at the workplace;
- 90% of workplaces had a safety consultation process in place; and
- 64% had a system in place for reviewing health and safety performance.

On review of safety statement compliance in the construction sector:

- 91% of safety statements met the criteria for relevant safety risk assessments;
- 89% of safety statements contained relevant health risk assessments;
- 87% of safety statements specified appropriate control measures for safety risks identified;
- 84% of safety statements specified appropriate control measures for health risks identified; and
- 69% allocated responsibilities to relevant managers.

The BeSMART tool reached 8,500 new users and had a total of 47,000 registered users by the end of 2017. The REACH Regulation, which deals with the production and use of chemical substances and their potential impacts on both human health and the environment, marked its ten year anniversary in 2017.

The Authority concluded 21 prosecutions in 2017, which resulted in fines totalling €2,695,500, compared with €614,000 in 2016.

The Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) also saw a rise in interest and applications for accreditation in regulated fields arising from the UK’s future exit of the EU.
Conclusion

The HSA has continued its increased focus into the construction sector due to the ongoing improvements in the economy and employment as discussed above. The HSA co-ordinated a wide range of events and conducted a number of campaigns in relation to construction safety.

The HSA plans to maintain their approach in supporting Irish enterprise in 2018 through the provision of information, advice, and enforcement where necessary. They will also continue their communication and awareness-raising activities so they can promote a culture of prevention.

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